

# Proposed Sterilization OF CERTAIN Mental and Physical Degenerates.

An Appeal to Asylum Managers and Others.

BY

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"CLARIFFE'S"; WILKES BEFORE WHO'S;  
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ROBERT REID RENTOUL.

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE; LATE MEMBER OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF MEDICAL EDUCATION FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM; MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, ENGLAND; LICENTIATE OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, EDINBURGH; HON. MEMBER MANCHESTER MEDICO-ETHICAL ASSOCIATION; AUTHOR OF "WOMAN'S HEALTH," "CAUSES AND TREATMENT OF ABORTION," "MEDICAL CHARITY REFORM"; WITNESS BEFORE TWO HOUSES OF COMMONS COMMITTEES UPON DEATH REGISTRATION, AND MIDWIVES REGISTRATION, ETC., ETC.

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"To be a good animal is the first requisite to success in life, and to be a nation of good animals is the first condition to national prosperity."—HERBERT SPENCER.

"The Public Health is the foundation on which repose the happiness of the people and the power of a country. The care of the Public Health is the first duty of a Statesman."—LORD BEACONSFIELD.

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## PREFACE.

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NOT a pleasant subject to write upon.

This pamphlet would have been published more than ten years ago had I not been engaged upon other work. Its production requires no apology. It is difficult to find words that will truly describe the appalling state of physical and mental degeneracy now existing in this country. It demands a searching and deep investigation. Perhaps the press is greatly to blame for not having placed before the public the true state of affairs, for the public generally depends upon the press for its information.

At present we are engaged in the—apparently pleasant pastime—manufacturing of lunatics and others of this class. Our asylums and like places are practically manufactories for degenerates. How long does the public propose that these things shall go on? Official returns show that, in 1901—

In England and Wales 1 in every 301 is an officially notified lunatic.<sup>1</sup>

„ Scotland	...	1	,	247	,	„	,	„
„ Ireland	...	1	,	206	,	„	,	„

Does the public approve of this state of affairs?

<sup>1</sup> On January 1st, 1903, 1 in 293 of the total population was a lunatic.

My most abject apologies are here offered—for what they may be thought worth—to those who have adopted *laissez faire* for their guidance; to those who object to be “bothered” about any question, even should such affect the public health intimately; to those who, by their actions, are deeply incriminated in the matter of having begotten a degenerate offspring; to those who “would put down with a strong hand” any efforts which would try to lead the public generally into a new path of thought; and to those whose mental darkness is pictured by the expression—“Rest and be thankful.”

In the ten years, 1893-1902, no less than 73,773 lunatics in England and Wales were discharged as “recovered.” In the eight years, 1895-1903, 8,933 lunatics were discharged as “recovered” from the asylums under the London County Council, but of this latter number 2,285 were re-admitted—1,119 within one year. Is it right, is it just to others, that so large a proportion of “recovered” persons should be permitted to return to ordinary life, there to beget a tainted offspring? We might, and with less danger, send out among the public persons cured of small-pox or plague without having first disinfected their clothes as release 73,773 persons from asylums as “recovered” to either resume or enter into conjugal relations.

In a work published by me in 1890—*Woman's Health*—I called attention to the fact that not only have the Jews, but the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, drawn up a statement showing who should not, from the point of affinity or consanguinity, marry. At the same time I expressed the regret that

the Medical Profession had, as a body, failed lamentably in their duty to the State in not having drawn up a somewhat similar Rule of Guidance. I hope they will soon do so; or if not, that some Government body will supply their remissness. In the work above referred to, I there attempted to make such a Rule.

In the Appendix, the law of the State of Minnesota, U.S.A., relating to the illegality of the marriages of certain degenerates will be found.

It is to be hoped no reader, in trying to arrive at a definite opinion, will allow his judgment to go beyond the facts stated.

LIVERPOOL, December 1903.



## PROPOSED STERILIZATION OF CERTAIN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL DEGENERATES.

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THERE is nothing original in this proposal. The anti-quarian will find statements to show that it has been recognised from the days of Solomon, and earlier; and among primitive and Mohammedan people. To-day, it is put into force as a recognised and legitimate operation, especially in obstetric practice. I only propose that the scope of the operation shall be extended so as to embrace certain diseased states.

In the succeeding pages I shall attempt to prove that there are some degenerates who, although they may have a right to marry, have no right to beget a tainted offspring—one which may be a danger to the public welfare, to themselves, or a tax upon private or public charity. Such degenerates should be sterilized, and so rendered unable to beget offspring.

Extracts from the annual reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy and others go to prove that it is full time, not only to look deeply into this proposal, but to recognise that public and private charity have not discharged their *sole* duty to degenerates by providing protection and maintenance. The following extracts are from the annual reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy (January, 1902):—

“The total number of lunatics of whom we have had

notice was, as on the 1st of January, 107,944, being an increase of 1,333 on the number on 1st January 1900. This increase of notified lunatics in 1900 compares with an increase of 1,525 in 1899, and one of 3,114 in 1898. . . . The results of the recent census are not yet fully revised, and the table cannot be corrected to date; but, accepting the approximate total of the population of England and Wales as communicated to the public press, namely 32,525,716, as sufficiently accurate for this purpose, it would appear that there is now one officially known lunatic to 301.32 individuals of the general population, as against one to 335 nine years ago, and one to 536 in 1859." (See *Fifty-fifth Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy, 1901: England and Wales.*)

One *officially* known lunatic to every 301 of the population! How many more are there *not* officially known?

Referring to lunacy in Scotland, the Commissioners state:—"It appears from this statement that at the 1st January 1902, there were in Scotland 16,288 insane persons of whom we had official cognisance. . . . As the total number at the 1st January 1901 was 15,899, an increase has taken place during the past year of 389. . . . From 1st January 1858 to 1st January 1902, the total number of lunatics officially known to the Board . . . has increased from 5,824 to 16,288, showing an increase of 10,464. . . . Since 1858 the number of lunatics under the jurisdiction of the Board has increased 180 per cent."

The population of Scotland in 1891 was 4,025,647. There was therefore one *officially notified* lunatic to every 247 of the population.

As regards Ireland, the Commissioners state there were on 1st January 1902, 21,630 lunatics. In 1881

there were 13,326. These statistics of 1901 show there was one *officially notified* lunatic to about 206 of the population. This is an increase upon a diminishing population.

The above statistics, it is to be noted, refer only to those *officially* notified. No doubt there is a large number of lunatics whose existence is not notified to the Commissioners. It is difficult to say how many thousands more; it has been roughly calculated that there are some 10,000 additional, because the number given in the Census Returns does not correspond with the number stated by the Commissioners in the Lunacy Reports. That a further increase will occur there is little doubt, unless some effectual system be adopted. Further, one has only to refer to that large number of persons who are more or less mono-maniacs, and those classified under the term "borderland cases."

The *Report of the Royal Commission on Physical Training, Scotland (1903)* has helped to focus attention upon the physical and mental condition of a portion of the people. It has lately been stated that there are 60,000 children in London alone who are physically inferior. Does the old saying still hold good—that the sound mind can exist only in the sound and well-fed body?

The *Report of the Army Medical Department (1901)* casts further light upon degeneracy. In that year 76,750 recruits were inspected; of this number 21,522 were rejected as unfit, and of the 55,228 selected no less than 1,014 were discharged from the army within three months of their enlistment. Among the many causes for rejection were—defective vision, 2,751; loss or decay of many teeth, 2,049; disease of veins, 1,073; varicocele, 1,066; under height, 1,041; under chest measurement, 3,829; under weight, 1,920.

The Inspector-General of Recruiting, in his annual report for 1902, says:—(Paragraph 75) “It will be seen that the percentage of recruits rejected for various ailments is considerably higher than for the last two years, and when examining these totals it must be borne in mind that they do not represent anything like the total number of the rejections of candidates for enlistment into the army.” Before the recruits are brought up for medical examination the recruiting sergeants are empowered to reject those who are palpably unfit! Why is no official return made of this latter class, and the reasons for their being rejected? Dare such *not* be made? In connection with the above army statistics, it should be noted that no less than 5,013 soldiers were discharged from the home army in twelve months, because they were found to be “unfit” upon medical grounds. The Recruiting Regulations fix a minimum height of 5 feet 2 inches, and a minimum weight of 115 lbs.

It is probable that if the Inspector of Marine Recruiting were instructed to publish statistics of recruits for the Navy and Marines, equally appalling statistics would be presented.<sup>1</sup>

If efforts be made to check the increase of tuberculosis, small-pox, malarial and other fevers, why cannot the *causes of lunacy* receive attention? It is strange how the vast majority of persons refuse to have anything to do with the depressing or disease conditions which are, unfortunately, associated with our lives. They prefer to seek the sunshine, and to extract the honey and pleasures from life! A selfish policy will

<sup>1</sup> “I have been shown a statement in writing from an Admiralty provincial recruiting officer, in which he asserts that fully fifty per cent. of the candidates for the Navy are rejected for physical causes.”—Speech by the Earl of Meath in the House of Lords, July 6th, 1903.

not do. Year by year knowledge must advance and spread. The creation of public bodies, such as county, borough, and district councils, demands that more men and women shall be qualified to think and to act. The late Dr. E. L. Fox, in his presidential address to the British Medical Association in 1894, when speaking of the duties of medical practitioners, said:—"As a profession we are above party: our highest aspirations tend to the formation of a pure commonwealth. The poor, the sick, the criminal are our daily study: primarily for the relief of the individual, but with nobler and farther-reaching aims—namely, that poverty may be mitigated by more healthy surroundings; that sickness may be diminished by the education of the nation on the wiser laws of health, by increased temperance, and by a knowledge from an early age of the common facts of physiology; and that the criminal class in the future may occupy narrow limits, because no longer the victims of debased heredity, poverty, disease, crime—these are the objects of our investigation as a profession, these are the foul blots in the State, for which we seek amelioration."

Although large sums of money are yearly expended upon the Public Health, although we have been presented with epigrams such as—"Health is Wealth," "The first Wealth is Health," "National Health is National Wealth," it can be truly asserted that only a small minority pay any real attention to the questions which bear so closely upon our mental and physical well-being. It seems almost a pity that the worship of some deities has become unfashionable, for if there be one more worthy than another of general deification it is surely that of the Greek goddess Hygeia. Perhaps in the future, the medical officer of health will be the "divinity"; while schools of physical and mental

culture will eventually drive it into the mind of people that no amount of money will compensate a nation for physical or mental degeneracy. It is more—much more—than 8000 years since heredity was elevated into the highest position in health matters. In the Ten Commandments it has been finally enacted that the faults or sins of parents shall be visited upon the children, even to the third and fourth generation—a cruel law no doubt, but one which we, being unable to escape, must face. No science—no human effort—can get behind this, one of the greatest proclamations of the ages, and one of the weightiest pieces of legislation ever enacted.

Yet, although the stock-breeder selects the best animals from which to produce the soundest stock, although he uses his best knowledge in selecting seeds and soils, the human being—with his knowledge, with his wealth, with his statistics, and with his mental power to recognise the terrible products of his want of care—pays little or no attention to either laws or experience. Here, it may be said, we owe a very great debt to those who study the breeding of better-class animals. It is here chiefly natural laws, aided by patient, watchful workers, secure that opportunity which enables Nature to show us what are her best methods. Perhaps a time will come when as much attention will be given to Health questions as is now given to financial, social, and sectarian. If so, mental and physical degeneracy will decrease.

#### *Our Present Efforts to Preserve Degenerates.*

The question—Do not many of our philanthropic and other charitable societies work indirectly for the survival of the unfit? It has been said that charity causes

more ills than it cures. This is to a large extent true. In our efforts to check suicides by protecting and controlling would-be suicides; in permitting many to beget a tainted offspring; in spending immense sums of money upon the upkeep of the unfit; in refusing to enact a law which will prevent those suffering from certain specific blood-poisoned diseases from marrying until cured—a class who have no more right to marry until cured than has a person suffering from small-pox—do we not in reality actively support the survival of the unfit? Think how Nature would reduce the number of lunatics to the smallest proportion, were she not so persistently and deliberately thwarted! Among a very large portion of the insane there is a marked suicidal tendency—some call it a “mania.” We do all in our power *to prevent* suicide. Years ago suicides were buried at the public cross-roads, a stake being driven through the body. Fortunately this has not acted as a deterrent. To-day we build palatial residences, and appoint immense staffs to protect lunatics from their mental impulses. Again, our Legislature attempts to make the obtaining of poisons as difficult as possible. The newspapers, in referring their readers to a “Horrible Case of Murder and Suicide”—where an insane parent has killed several of her likely-to-be insane children and herself—seem to overlook the fact that this act is one having for its object the extermination of the unfit parent and family.

Yet, although thousands of pounds are expended yearly upon the care of lunatics, Nature’s method—that of suicide—goes on, as it must and will go on. Not only so, but, fortunately, it increases. A reference to the Blue Book, *Criminal Statistics*, Part I., 1899, shows this is so. The number of “*attempted*” suicides also has proportionately increased: from 172 in the

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three years 1857 to 1861, to 2,067 in 1897 to 1899. As regards "certified" suicides, there were, in 1899, 2,844 in England and Wales. How many others there were which were not certified, it is difficult to tell. Very probably a large number of deaths under the misleading headings—"Accidental," "Negligence," "Not certified," are in reality cases of suicide. In 1899 there were 18,665 deaths from "violence" alone, in England and Wales. According to the *Fifty-fifth Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy (1901)*, of 18,774 lunatics, *one in every four and a half* was officially reported as having "suicidal tendencies." Further, a great number of cases where suicide has been attempted are never reported to the police by medical practitioners called in. There is no statute law which makes it compulsory for a medical practitioner called in to treat an attempted suicide to report the fact to the police. It would be better if there were, just as there now is in notifying infectious diseases. Some thousands attempt to commit suicide yearly.

Taking the above facts into consideration, the question presents itself—Are we justified in endeavouring to prevent lunatics and other degenerates from committing suicide? Are we justified in refusing the right to the incurably deranged and diseased to leap from a Clifton or other bridge? Are we right in giving medals and other rewards to persons who have prevented the would-be suicide from putting his craving into effect? There is no justice in blaming the suicide for his or her act. If he were insane, then he could not help doing it. Sir Thomas More, in his *Utopia*, when describing his ideal republic, represents the priests and magistrates as encouraging all afflicted with incurable diseases to commit suicide. It need scarcely be mentioned that no one wishes healthy persons to commit suicide. In attempt-

ing to prevent suicides we go further still, as the law provides that those who attempt, but who fail to succeed, are prosecuted for "attempting to commit suicide."

### *How does Nature Deal with Degenerates?*

In dealing with degenerates, does Nature give any help? I think she does. Nature is always at war, and, to quote Spencer's apt expression, "the survival of the fittest" will come about. When persons neither mentally nor physically strong marry, one of two events may take place: either absolute sterility or miscarriage. Or, if there be offspring, it is so delicate that it soon dies. During 1899, 18,548 *live-born* infants died in England and Wales, death being certified as due to "premature birth," the latter being frequently caused by parental diseases or weaknesses. As regards the number of births—other than "live births"—known as miscarriage or still-births, there are many thousands each year in this country. Were this war of nature permitted to be universal, there would be no call for artificial sterilization; *natural* sterilization would be sufficient. Another method by which Nature helps is by creating a social repugnance in our community when healthy and sane intermarry with unhealthy and those with insane tendency; when persons differing widely in their respective ages marry; or when different races intermarry. But all do not, nor can they, feel such repugnance. For such legislation is required. It is difficult for any thinking person to understand why any man or woman suffering from insanity, epilepsy, consumption, cancer, leprosy, sexual degeneracy, dipsomania, or any disease which can be handed down from parent to child, should take practical steps to

bring such about. Although Nature—unable to succeed without our help—strives and yearns to keep a pure type; although she makes the idiot and cretin frequently sterile; and although thinking men and women know that no law of nature can be ignored or abused without Nature retaliating, there is a large proportion who act as if they had no idea that husband and wife live, not for themselves alone, but also for posterity and the public well-being. Nature never has, and never will, forgive faults in this action of ours to propagate degenerates. She may pretend to overlook for a time, but some day—it may be in ten, twenty, or thirty years or more—she will send in her account, and probably with compound interest added. A story is told of Dr. Wendell Holmes. He was called in by a mother to see her child. Giving his opinion, he said a consultation should have taken place some time before. The mother replied that such had actually taken place. Holmes said, "Ah, madam, the consultation should have been held some fifty years ago." The child was suffering from hereditary disease. Thus it must be when bad material has been used in building up the offspring. "Jerry-building," even of human beings, never gives good results.

#### *Murder of Degenerates?*

It has been suggested that the children of degenerate marriages should be killed. Among some animals the offspring, when deformed, is killed by its parents. No doubt primitive man, in watching the actions of such animals, adopted certain of their actions. But the one great guiding law for each person, medical and other, must be—Keep everything alive. For if to-morrow every degenerate were killed, but the causes of their being degenerate were unattended to, then as large a

number of degenerates would take their place. There is no real cure so long as *the causes* remain ignored. In ancient Sparta, the exposure of infants sometimes degenerated into systematic murder. No thinking person can advocate a policy of murder. These poor degenerates have a perfect right to live, no matter how their parents have acted. If any person be murdered, those who caused the condition should be made to suffer. A policy of murder would be a policy of cowardice: it proposes to attack the creature least able to defend itself. It savours of the punishing of the illegitimate infant; the parent escaping. Pity in the human heart for all kinds of suffering must be universal. Lecky (*History of Morals in Europe*) states that in ancient Greece one altar, standing alone, was much more honoured than all others. It was dedicated to Pity. In Jewish and early Christian times, the mentally deranged were spoken of as "possessed of devils," "evil spirits," and "witches." To these poor people—some wandering among the tombs—the most atrocious punishments were meted out. Gradually a better feeling has taken place; chiefly first due to Mohammedan effort. Now educated opinion and the humane administration of the law endeavour to protect those unable to protect themselves. Every care which a higher civilisation can provide for these must be forthcoming, and when possible, the home or asylum must be conducted with a view to either relieve or, if possible, cure. We must recognise that almost every degenerate has been produced by parents who have violated some law of nature. They are the reflex in the mirror of our actions. The providing for these degenerates is the penalty—the fine—we *must* pay. The writing upon the wall is sufficiently plain. Only the application of this knowledge is needed. An

unctious hypocrisy must not be permitted to write on the tombstone "Thy will be done," when a contemptible effort has been made to drag the Creator into a situation in which only the parents have played the chief part.

*The Marriage of Degenerates Forbidden.*

Can the intermarriage of degenerates be prevented? In the United States a number of the State legislatures have proposed that no one should be permitted to marry until the man and woman have secured permission to do so from an examining board; the board making an inquiry into the mental and physical conditions of those who propose to marry. Some of these States have actually adopted such a law. In Minnesota the Act of 1901 enacts that no woman under forty-five years of age, or man of any age—except he marry a woman over forty-five—shall marry, if suffering from epilepsy, imbecility, insanity, or feeble-mindedness, the legal penalty for so doing being a fine of 1000 dollars, or imprisonment for three years, or both. Other workers in other States, such as Wisconsin, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, Michigan, and Colorado, are trying to secure similar legislation. Such legislation appears to be one which has not been sufficiently thought out, and should not have been put forward. If permission to marry be refused, it will inevitably lead to a condition in which many would live together out of wedlock. Such legislation would not therefore lessen the number of degenerate offspring. No one should be forbidden to marry because of their being a degenerate. But neither should they be advised to. My contention is, that certain scheduled degenerates should be forbidden by legislature to *perpetuate their*

*degeneracy to an offspring*, or to place upon the taxpayers the heavy expenditure required to support degenerates. It is not right. It is neither fair nor honest to the present or to future population. The propagation of degenerates should be a punishable offence. Marry—Yes. Beget tainted offspring—No.

In connection with this point, it may here be mentioned that no proof, worthy of the name, has been produced to show that the intermarriage of near kin—*healthy* near kin—is the cause of degeneracy. But if relatives having any hereditary disease intermarry, evil results will follow; in fact, the diseased conditions will be intensified. A. H. Huth's book—*The Marriage of Near Kin*—generally shows that such intermarriages are physiologically right; although a few consider such morally or socially wrong. Among animals, interbreeding with relatives is much in vogue with those who rear prize cattle, and with the best results.

It has been suggested that marriage should be simply a contract agreed to for the purpose of bringing up a "fit" and healthy offspring; and that when a degenerate offspring results, or when there has been a concealment of mental or physical defects *before* marriage by either side, the marriage contract shall be rendered void. As regards the first proposal, it savours of locking the stable door after the steed has been stolen; while that relating to certain pre-nuptial physical and mental degeneracies has been recognised by law for many years. All must agree with the action of the Roman Church in laying it down that it is not right to kill the unborn infant with the aim of trying to save the life of the woman about to become a mother, and because of her deformity. Artificial sterilization is now here happily recognised as a legitimate surgical operation for the prevention of such murder.

*Boy and Girl Marriages.*

The heightening of the age at which boys and girls can lawfully marry would lead to a lessening of the number of mentally and physically degenerate infants. In a country such as ours, with a large population, it is more than absurd our customs permit a boy of fourteen years and a girl of twelve years to marry.<sup>1</sup> Boy and girl marriages spell degeneracy; just as certainly as do the yoking of old age and youth. Liberty can degenerate into brute licence, and the male become a beast. We are badly—considering our position in civilisation—qualified to point the finger at customs in India as regards child marriages. The age of marriage is not fixed by statute: only by common law. We still retain the age limits which the Roman nation had previous to the time of Justinian. The respective ages should be fixed by Parliament, at a minimum of twenty-one for the man and twenty for the woman. It would also be well to enact that any *promise* to marry if made before the age of twenty-one, by either, would be invalid. The law holds that the marriage is void if the contracting parties have not the mind-power to understand the nature of conjugal relations. It is difficult to believe that a girl of twelve can understand such relations. Idiots and insane persons cannot marry. Would it not be well if the boy of fourteen and the girl of twelve were scheduled under the heading “idiot,” if they proposed marriage?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With consent of father or mother or guardian.

<sup>2</sup> So determined do we appear to uphold the “survival of the unfit” that our law provides that a man cannot lawfully sustain a breach of a promise to marry because he has developed some disease; or because married life is likely to endanger his life or health; or because he is likely to beget a lunatic offspring!!! (See *Hall v. Wright*, 29 *Law Journal*, Q.B.D., p. 43; 6 *The Jurist*, N.S., p. 193; 8 *Weekly Reporter*, p. 160.)

The Registrar-General's Report, fortunately, shows that the average age of persons marrying is rising. In 1899, it was about twenty-six years for bachelors, and twenty-five for spinsters. But the report also shows that fifty per thousand of the husbands, and one hundred and sixty-five per thousand of the wives, were minors when married. A raising of the present marriageable age, combined with a knowledge of physiology and the rules of health, will act as powerful influences in guiding the sane and healthy portion of the population to arrive at a true finding as to who should beget offspring. It is most instructive to know that a very large proportion of feeble-minded infants are the first-born of a family. There is, however, a proportion of the population—other than the sane and healthy—who, if they wish to marry, must be told that they shall not be permitted to hand down their insanity or unhealthiness to their offspring. This may be a small proportion; yet the references above prove that it is a proportion sufficiently large to degrade many, a proportion which must be legislated for if we wish to preserve the purity of our race. Surely no one should be so wanting in pity for children, or in common-sense, as to suggest that diseased persons shall be given the right to transmit their diseased conditions to unoffending infants. Farms may be provided for epileptics; leprosy patients must be isolated and supported; the idiot and imbecile, the feeble-minded, the lunatic and chronic inebriate, kept at the expense of the taxpayers. All these benevolent and humanitarian agencies are now required. Their existence tends to bring about a survival of the unfit. It is to check the further growth of the unfit I suggest an extension of sterilization to certain degenerates who propose to perpetuate their degraded conditions.

It may be suggested that if we adopt artificial sterilization—using the word “artificial” in contradistinction to the term natural sterilization as enforced by nature, and already referred to—we may take it the medical practitioner acknowledges he is unable to cure many hereditary taints. He is absolutely unable. He knows prevention is the *only* cure. It may also be put forward that by adopting compulsory sterilization we interfere with the liberty of the individual. But the persons to be operated upon would largely be those from whom our laws have already taken their liberty. They are a diseased community, and their general liberty would be no more interfered with than are those now operated upon for some recognised medical or surgical disease, or those placed under restraint.

#### *Artificial Sterilization.*

In the animal kingdom artificial sterilization is frequently performed by those who breed cattle of various kinds. No evil results follow. In the United Kingdom, in 1901, there were over two million horses, eleven million cattle, thirty million sheep, and three and a half million pigs. A very large proportion of these have been sterilized, and yet no ill results to health or life have been recorded; the operation having often been performed by very ordinary persons. Again, among farmyard birds, the capon illustrates the facility by which the operation is accomplished. A well-known veterinary surgeon tells me that no one, except those immediately concerned, have any idea of the vast number of all kinds of animals which are sterilized. Again, in Mohammedan countries a large proportion of human beings are sterilized so as to produce eunuchs. In the New Testament the place of sterility is officially

recognised, where Matthew reports Christ as having stated that there were three kinds of sterilization—first, those born so; second, those made so; and third, those operated upon for religion's sake. Many years ago, Boetius wrote:—"Heretofore in Scotland, if any were visited with falling sickness, madness, gout, leprosy, or such dangerous disease which was likely to be propagated from father to son, he was instantly gelded, and a woman kept from all company of men." It has been stated, that among the primitive black population of Australia an operation was performed by which a permanent fistulous opening was made in the posterior portion of the urethra. The operation of removing a live infant from the womb of the human female because of her deformity, is now almost always accompanied by sterilizing her. Each year many hundreds of persons are sterilized by having diseased reproductive organs removed. In fact, the very disease itself frequently sterilizes the sufferer.

#### *Who should be Sterilized?*

With respect to those who should be operated upon, this would be decided by a lawfully-constituted Board. One may suggest that those suffering from leprosy, cancer, epilepsy, idiots, imbeciles, cretins, weak-minded under restraint, lunatics, persons with advanced organic disease of the heart, lungs, kidneys, or in fact, any specific disease liable to be passed from parent to offspring, should, if they wish to marry, be sterilized. Further, it is likely that a large proportion of those who adopt the life of prostitution do so because they are mental degenerates, and have lost the faculty of self-control. It has been calculated that there are over 60,000 professional prostitutes in England. Children born of such are not likely to be of any benefit to the

State. Again, if there be one poor wretch whom society should try to save from his or her insane impulses, it is the sexual degenerate. In legal parlance, he or she is one who commits "crimes against good morals." For many years medical practitioners have pointed out to law-makers that such offences are not, in reality, "crimes." They are cases of sexual insanity, and no doubt they will be eventually treated as such. In 1899, no less than 1,015 cases of rape and indecent assaults were reported to the police in England and Wales. Also, 127 unnatural offences; 330 defilement of girls under sixteen years; and 8,413 were tried for prostitution. It is rather startling to read that in the year 1898-99, the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children took action in no less than 10,796 cases where children had been "immorally outraged." No such terrible conditions could exist unless so many sexual degenerates were permitted to go unprotected. A surgical, not the present legal, punishment is required. Another class who might well come under a law of sterilization are *confirmed* tramps and vagrants, characters well known to workhouse officials and to the police. It has been stated that there are some 36,000 to 50,000 tramps and vagrants in England and Wales. Confirmed criminals and criminal lunatics should also receive attention. It is further reasonable to suppose that a fair number of sensible persons afflicted with incurable disease would voluntarily ask that they be operated upon. In the case of women who become insane only during pregnancy, and also in those who are afflicted with so deformed a pelvis that it is most unlikely they can ever be confined of a live child *per vias naturales*, the operation would be allowable.

Another class—a very large class—of diseased and disease-producing persons, and therefore of those who

beget physical and mental degenerates, to whom this question must be applied are those who suffer from infectious venereal diseases. Should these be sterilized? It is probable that the public has no idea of the vast numbers who are so affected. It is difficult in this country—one in which, unfortunately, a mock modesty is permitted to dictate a rule of inaction even to health authorities, and in which the “ostrich policy” of hiding things under the surface with a make-believe idea of non-existence is applauded—to either discuss or to legislate upon this very grave question. But if it can be shown that thousands of innocent persons suffer who should not, surely action should be taken. A reference to the *Army Medical Department Report, 1901*, shows that of 100,811 troops stationed in the United Kingdom, there were, in that year, admitted:

For Primary Syphilis	...	1,938	“admissions.”
„ Soft Chancre	...	988	,
„ Secondary Syphilis	...	1,907	,
„ Gonorrhœa	...	5,794	,

Thus, we see that there were 10,631 admissions in twelve months. Multiply these figures by 30, and this will give some trivial idea of what has taken place during these years. The term “admission” includes only those admitted as in-patients to hospital. How many were out-patients, and refused the services of the army surgeon, the above Report does not show.

If reference be made to the troops in India—and not including those stationed in other parts of the Empire—for the same twelve months, it will be found that of 60,838 men, there were:

For Primary Syphilis	...	2,021	“admissions.”
„ Soft Chancre	...	3,921	,
„ Secondary Syphilis	...	3,544	,
„ Gonorrhœa	...	7,303	,

"The average stay of each case in hospital was 30·79 days . . . and the total loss of service was 514,855 days." These statistics do not include all the admissions, for "generative diseases" and very many diseases classified under other heads are really due, in the first place, to venereal complaints.

Again, if reference be made to the *Statistical Report of the Health of the Navy* for 1901, it will be found that there were 98,410 men "afloat"—that is, excluding those ashore and on foreign stations. Of this number there were:

For Primary Syphilis	...	3,293	under treatment.
,, Secondary Syphilis	...	2,110	,, ,
,, Gonorrhœa	...	5,790	,, ,

The Army and Navy system of classifying diseases is not the same. Further, it must be noted that one person may be admitted more than once during the year, and so be counted as more than one person. Of statistics relating to the Mercantile Marine I am unable to obtain any figures. Those who have acted as surgeons to steamships have a sad knowledge of the havoc made upon the men, and of a condition of affairs which is appalling when compared with those of the Army and Navy.

When will those in power tell the public that all such diseases must be notified by the patient, or practitioner, or other person having knowledge respecting the occurrence of the disease?<sup>1</sup> We have compulsory notification of small-pox and other fevers, and such, when not able to receive treatment at home, are removed to hospital. The sooner such a system is applied to venereal diseases in their infective stages the sooner

<sup>1</sup> Sec. 126 of the Public Health Act, 1875, enacts that if any person suffering from an infectious disease wilfully exposes himself, he or she may be fined £5. Why can we not extend this to contagious diseases?

will the public health and welfare benefit to a marked degree. I do not refer to the proposed registration of these degenerates. It has been stated that the existence of consumption among the poor of New York costs that city over four and a half millions sterling. What sum is paid out yearly for the up-keep of venereal diseases? It is reckoned that of the total blindness affecting people, about one-half of it is due to purulent conjunctivitis (inflammation of the eyelids), and that 25 per cent. of this is due to this complaint as it affects the eyes of infants. A very large proportion of this disease is due to gonorrhœa.

Lastly, there are those children who are neither idiots nor imbeciles, but who are classified as "backward cases," "dull," and "weak-minded." They are to be found in homes for "feeble-minded" children. It is not contended that such will be unfit for citizenship. I only claim that they are, in the future, unfit to beget healthy offspring.

#### *The Operation.*

As regards the operation itself, I do not suggest that the essential organs of reproduction in the male and female—the testicles or the ovaries—be removed. In a large proportion of persons—excluding cases in which these organs themselves are diseased—all that is required is to excise about two inches of the spermatic cords in the male, or of the fallopian tubes in the female. An important reason for not removing the glands is that the system might suffer, it being now generally recognised that these are occupied not in one function only, but also in manufacturing what is known as anti-toxins—*i.e.*, antidotes to poisons which are manufactured in the system. The operation would be

performed about twelve months before the degenerate is given permission to marry, as the elements of fructification might not all have left the system.

*What Authority should Sanction the Operation?*

This is a grave question. I would suggest that every safeguard be provided. Parliament should empower each County Council to yearly appoint a board composed of one person qualified in Medicine, one in Law, one by the Commissioners in Lunacy, one from the County Council, and one by the Commissioners of Prisons. Rules would be drawn up by these boards, such being presented to the Home Office for confirmation or otherwise. An annual report of all operations should be presented to Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

If the Commissioners in Lunacy and of Prisons, the Asylum Committees of County Councils, the managers of homes for idiots, imbeciles, and epileptics, of homes for dipsomaniacs, and Poor Law Guardians will discuss this proposal—a proposal in no respect original—a step in the right direction will have been taken. Some time ago, when conversing with a member of the Visitation Committee of a County Council to lunatic asylums upon the marked increase of lunatics, he said: "You doctors have much to answer for in not speaking out on this grave subject." It is to be feared that medical practitioners are blameworthy in not having come forward with a remedy. Perhaps the subject is not personally inviting; to myself it is the very opposite of inviting.

But there is no good to be derived from a policy of "funk" or "hush." Certain pain-giving facts must be

<sup>1</sup> Not more than two surgeons in each county would be licensed by the Home Office to operate.

straightforwardly noted, no matter how unpleasant. We have the facts—that last year there were 137,558 officially recognised lunatics in the United Kingdom; that this number is steadily increasing; that there is about one lunatic to every two hundred and fifty of the general population; that there is also a large number of lunatics of whose existence there is no *official* cognisance; that a great number of persons, other than those suffering from mental diseases, beget a diseased offspring; that this is unjust to children—the future manhood and womanhood of the State; that it is unjust to the taxpayers called upon to support an increasing number of degenerates; and that, if no check is put upon the present methods of merely treating symptoms, and not grappling with *the causes*, very evil results must accrue. Taking some figures from Sir H. Burdett's *Hospitals and Charities*, 1902, I find that of ninety-nine asylums in England, the large sum of £1,897,056 was expended in the upkeep of seventy-six of these in twelve months. Is this expenditure to go on, and also to increase yearly?

If the suggestions now made help to focus public attention upon a very grave state of affairs, and, even in so small a manner, go to bring about that phase when

“Thought by thought is piled, till some great Truth  
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,”

then they will have contributed some little to further the greatest branch of medicine—the preventative, and to increase the public health.

## APPENDICES.

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### I.—MARRIAGE LAW. STATE OF MINNESOTA, U.S.A.

#### CHAPTER 234, S.F. NO. 185.

AN Act regulating marriage, and prohibiting marriage by or with persons afflicted with imbecility, feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, or insanity, and prescribing penalties for the punishment of persons violating the provisions of this Act.

“Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota :

“SECTION 1.—No woman under the age of forty-five years, or man of any age, except he marry a woman over the age of forty-five years, either of whom is epileptic, imbecile, feeble-minded, or afflicted with insanity, shall hereafter intermarry or marry any other person within this State. It is also hereby made unlawful for any person to marry such feeble-minded, imbecile, or epileptic person, or any one afflicted with insanity.

“SEC. 2.—No officer authorised by law to issue marriage licences in this State shall hereafter issue such a licence to any persons either of whom is afflicted with any of the diseases mentioned in Section 1 of this Act, knowing them to be so afflicted, unless the female party to such marriage is over the age of forty-five years.

“SEC. 3.—No clergyman or officer authorised by law to solemnise marriages within this State shall hereafter perform a marriage ceremony uniting persons in matrimony either of whom is afflicted with epilepsy, imbecility, feeble-mindedness, or insanity, knowing them to be so afflicted, unless the female party to such marriage is over the age of forty-five years.

“SEC. 4.—Any person violating any of the provisions of this Act shall, upon conviction thereof, be punished by a fine of not more than 1000 dollars, or by imprisonment in the State prison for not more than three years, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

“SEC. 5.—This Act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

“Approved, April 11th, 1901.”

## II.—MARRIAGE OF DEGENERATES.

EXTRACT from the Annual Report of Dr. F. H. Craddock,  
Medical Superintendent, to the Committee of the Gloucester  
County Lunatic Asylums, 1902.

"If, as I have always strongly held and enunciated, hereditary predisposition is the chief factor in the causation of insanity, if the reproduction of their species by physically and mentally tainted, immature, and drunken parents, is allowed to go on unchecked, the outlook for our descendants is indeed gloomy. Let me give a concrete instance and—*ex uno discere omnes*. A man who has been an inmate here more than once—on the last occasion for some five or six years—unexpectedly began to improve, and at length was so much better that his relatives wished to give him a trial at home. I willingly assented, and he was in due course discharged. Within a few months we heard he was engaged to be married, and he actually was married to—it will hardly be credited—the daughter of a woman who has been here for years, and is never likely to be anywhere else. It is difficult to find words to denounce what I hold to be the wickedness, the criminal nature of such a union: persons who do such acts are beyond the reach of argument, and prohibitory legal enactments with the most stringent sanctions would be not only justifiable, but urgently demanded in this and similar cases, which, far from being isolated or even rare, are constantly being forced under our observation."

NOTE BY AUTHOR.—How can persons of *proved* unsound mind be punished for their acts?

## III.—EXTRACT FROM A WOMAN'S LETTER.

"For years I have been struggling to prevent idiots and lunatics being sent from our county asylum to marry and breed more idiots—just as if the thing were desirable! I gave it up in hopeless despair about four years ago, owing to the following case:—A woman who is more than half idiotic came to live with two sisters—one a total and the other a partial idiot. She married a very dull, partially idiotic man, and had almost immediately to be taken to the asylum. There she gave birth to a complete idiot, and was sent home a few weeks afterwards, with the result that the same thing has been repeated nine

times. I wrote to several county magistrates (my husband's fellow-magistrates) and to all the local authorities over and over again, but was told I was cold and hard-hearted."

NOTE BY AUTHOR.—We want many such "cold and hard-hearted women." But again I ask—How can such degenerates be punished? Rather punish—as I have elsewhere stated—those who have been the actual cause of propagating these degenerates.

#### IV.—DOCTOR LOMBROSO ON THE INCREASE OF INSANITY.

"Insane persons have multiplied a hundredfold with civilisation to such an extent that, where a few years ago one madman was enough, now 500 are needed. In the United States, while the population doubled in little more than thirty years, the insane increased sixfold, so in the last decade the increase in population was 30 per cent., and that of insane 155 per cent. In France there were 131.1 insane per 100,000 inhabitants in 1883, 133 in 1884, 136 in 1888. These figures indicate that the number of the insane is larger in most civilised countries, and is increasing every year. It may indeed be said that many of these insane are not produced but are only revealed by civilisation, and that the opening of the large asylums has caused a considerable number to be brought into the light who were not known of before. It is true that the greater care we now give to the insane, as well as to consumption, makes them longer lived, and it is true that as the mind grows enlightened criminals come to be regarded as insane, and thus increase the apparent number of such. But all this is not sufficient to explain a doubling in a decade—a tenfold increase in twenty years."

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